

Item 9.A - E-Bike Safety Action Plan

From Matt Miller <matt.miller@ecoact.org>

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To City Council <citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us>

 1 attachment (963 KB)

City of Capitola - Letter of Support E-Bike Safety 3.11.26.docx;

Dear Capitola City Council,

Please find a letter of support for Item 9.A at tomorrow's council meeting.

Thank you for all you do,

Matt Miller (he/him)

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3/11/26

City of Capitola City Council
420 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, CA 95010
RE: Item 9.A. E-Bike Safety Action Plan

Dear Mayor Morgan and Capitola City Council,

I want to begin by thanking the City of Capitola for its continued attention to community safety and e-bikes. The City's recent enforcement efforts and its interest in strengthening safety education—particularly in partnership with schools—reflect a strong and collaborative approach that balances the excitement, joy, and independence that e-bikes bring with overall community safety.

As the City continues this important work, I encourage you to review the newly released Mineta Transportation Institute report, *Exploring Electric Bicycle Safety Performance Data and Policy Options for California*. This statewide research provides critical context for local decision-making. One of its clearest findings is that many incidents attributed to “e-bikes” involve non-legal, high-powered electric vehicles—often exceeding 750 watts or capable of speeds above 20–28 mph. In fact, counts at Northern California schools show that as few as 12% of devices ridden by youth are legal e-bikes. This means that many of the safety risks communities see are not caused by compliant Class 1–3 e-bikes, but by unregulated or modified devices that fall outside the state's e-bike definitions.

The MTI report also urges caution in policymaking because our current data systems often fail to distinguish between legal e-bikes and illegal devices. This leads to significant data quality gaps that limit our ability to design effective, evidence-based local policy. Improving device classification in crash reports and strengthening data collection statewide are central recommendations from the report and would meaningfully support Capitola's safety efforts. It appears that City of Capitola is already well underway on adding this level of insight and clarity in its data collection and reporting.

Finally, I encourage the City to consider that infrastructure is an indispensable part of the safety equation. The MTI report highlights safe, dedicated bicycle infrastructure as one of the most effective strategies to reduce severe injuries for all riders—youth and adults alike. While education and enforcement remain important, infrastructure investments are the proven foundation of long-term safety outcomes.

Capitola's continued leadership, paired with the findings in the new MTI report, offers an opportunity to pursue policies that (1) distinguish legal ebikes from illegal high powered devices, (2) strengthen data and reporting systems, and (3) integrate infrastructure improvements alongside education and enforcement. This balanced approach will best support safe, sustainable mobility for the Capitola community.

Thank you for your continued work on this issue.

Sincerely,
Matt Miller
Director, Mobility Transformation